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Claims

[c1] 1. An automotive vehicle body, comprising:
a floor structure;
a roof; a door opening panel welded to said floor structure and to said roof, with said door opening panel being formed from a tailor welded metal blank furnishing a first thickness of material for a lower portion of the door opening panel blank, and a second thickness of material for an upper portion of said door opening panel, with said upper and lower portions being joined at an approximately horizontal weld line.

[c2] 2. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, wherein said weld line is linear.

[c3] 3. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, wherein said tailor welded blank comprises a steel alloy.

[c4] 4. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, wherein said tailor welded blank comprises an aluminum alloy.

[c5] 5. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, wherein said upper and lower portions of said tailor welded blank are welded by a laser welding process.

[c6] 6. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, wherein the said lower portion of said tailor welded blank is thicker material than the upper portion of said tailor welded blank.

[c7] 7. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, further comprising a pickup box having a leading end extending laterally outwardly and forward of a rear corner of said door opening panel so as to conceal a portion of said weld line.

[c8] 8. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, further comprising a passenger door mounted so as to conceal a portion of said weld line by overlying said weld line when said door is in a closed position.

[c9] 9. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, further comprising a front passenger door and a rear passenger door, with each of said doors being attached to said door opening panel so as to overlie said weld line.

[c10] 10. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 1, further comprising an inner door opening panel welded to a generally vertical interior portion of said door opening panel.

[c11] 11. An automotive vehicle body, comprising:

a floor structure;
a roof structure;
a plurality of door opening panels welded to said floor structure and to said roof structure, with each of said panel being formed from a metal blank having a greater thickness of metal at a lower portion of said blank and a lesser of thickness of metal at the upper portion of said blank, with said lower and upper parts being joined by an approximately horizontal weld; and
a plurality of doors attached to the body with at least some of said doors having at least one hinge mounted to said body so as to overlie said horizontal weld.

[c12] 12. An automotive vehicle body according to Claim 11, further comprising a cargo structure overlying at least a portion of the weld lines of said plurality of door opening panels.

[c13] 13. A method for fabricating and installing a door opening panel for an automotive vehicle, comprising the steps of:
stamping a plurality of metal sub-blanks having at least two different gauge thicknesses;
joining said sub-blanks with a linear weld joint;
stamping said welded sub-blanks so as to form a door opening panel; and
welding said door opening panel to an automotive vehi-

cle body such that said weld joint is oriented generally horizontally and the thicker of said at least two difference gauge thicknesses is below said weld joint.

[c14] 14. A method according to Claim 13, further comprising the step of mounting at least one door to said door opening panel by means of hinges attached to said door opening panel below said weld joint.